PUNK IS DEAD.
ACTIVISM IS ALIVE.

A personal reflection on the problems with the punk scene.

Written by:
someone who is still a punk.

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WHY (in my experience)

~~PUNK IS DEAD.~~

but,

ACTIVISM IS ALIVE.

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PUNK IS DEAD... AND THE PUNKS HAVE KILLED IT!

Punk was never just about sound or wardrobe. And it has never been simply just a label. There is no denying it is a genre, but the most important part is often left out. Punk is a lifestyle of refusal.

Punk is rooted in DIY. Improv basement venues, shitty diy clothes, zines that taught people how to organize, and resistance built from our own many hands. The scene wasn't just about loud music or DIY style. It was a form of grassroots activism. It organized housing, food, shows, protests, and mutual aid long before those terms became mainstream. It proved that people rejected from traditional power structures could still build something meaningful together.
Punk was not built from waiting for a change. It was especially, never interested in conforming. Punk was a culture built by rejects for rejects. Its very core came from community, direct action, and mutual support.

Unfortunately, the contemporary scene has strayed far from those roots. And yet, it still calls itself a home for outsiders. And the people who most need that home rarely find it. The same individuals the scene claims to protect (queer punks, disabled punks, punks of color, poor punks) often encounter exclusion instead of solidarity. These issues are often observed yet overlooked or even ignored, and never addressed. Racism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, classism, and a persistent elitism undermines any sense of safety or community within the scene. I've seen it, I've experienced it, and know many who have endured the same. Somehow, the scene ended up reproducing the same patterns of harm it was supposed to reject.

Part of this comes from who tends to occupy the space today. Privileged participants. People who are privileged either financially or socially, enter the scene and adopt its aesthetics without sharing the core values. Many dress the part, or even play the part. But the scene remain absent from its work. Community events, mutual aid, and support networks that once defined punk's purpose, have disappeared. Punks have started to perform rebellion without experiencing it.

The culture inside the scene only strengthens its problems. Too many individuals wield their place in punk, not to uplift others, but to control or diminish them. Rumors, gatekeeping, and targeted harassment become tools for asserting popular dominance under the facade of "authenticity." It seems punk has become less about truth and more about constructing an identity by tearing others down. These dynamics in the scene create pointless drama instead of lasting change and drive people away from what the scene could have been.

Activism Is Alive (and Doing Okay.)

The roots of punk may be long gone, but this work still exists today. It exists in activism. Even for all its apparent flaws, it remains one of the few places where real change is attempted. This work is still alive and kicking, but hanging on by a thin rope. It has become severely understaffed, and by result, stretched too far and burnt out from constant crisis. Movements only survive on the backs of people who keep showing up. Everyone claims to care, but far fewer are willing to act. The gap between belief and participation is widening, and the cost is our future.

Where punk has become lazy with community, autonomy, and resistance, activists have picked up the slack. But movements will not survive without more people committing to the work. Activism requires more hands, more ideas, and certainly, more of that true punk spirit. If punks want to reclaim anything about their origins, If they want the scene to matter again, they must stop treating resistance as an identity and start treating it as labor. The work needs doing. Someone has to show up. That someone is us.